

ROANOKE PUBLIC LIBRARY E-BRANCH OPENS AT VALLEY VIEW MALL

The Roanoke Public Library located in the City of Roanoke completed a Comprehensive Library study in December of 2005. This study recommended the use of a kiosk to expand information to a high retail or unserved area of the City. Valley View, a large regional mall located in the heart of the City of Roanoke was the retail area that the Library staff aspired to develop. Once the Library highlighted to the Mall management the economic benefits and unique services that this site would bring to the Mall work began on the lease along with plans for a Library presence at Valley View.

The new Valley View ebranch expands on the original Library Study recommendation for just a kiosk. The ebranch concept combines traditional library services such as convenient book return, scheduled story times and a puppet theatre with new ideas such as a multi-lingual information kiosk, the only wireless hot spot area in the Mall and remote lockers for a customer to pick up their books and other library materials. The Roanoke Public Libraries worked with SFCS, Inc. and PSA Dewberry in the design of the ebranch structure. A local millwork firm Architectural Wood worked closely with Library staff and the City of Roanoke's building maintenance staff to implement the design.

The key elements of the ebranch services are a kiosk, lockers, book return, programs/puppet theatre, wireless access and places for flyers and holders on the ebranch structure for the marketing of Library services. The Public Information Kiosk (PIKiosk) is manufactured by Public Information Kiosk, Inc. of Germantown, Maryland and distributed by 3M Library Systems of St. Paul MN. The kiosk delivers voice and data from the touch screen. Pre-programmed telephone dialing software allows the user to connect directly to the Reference and City help desks. A customer can pick up the attached phone to talk immediately to a Reference librarian at the library and receive documents from the library reference desk directly to the kiosk via e-FAX. Books can be reserved from the kiosk via an interface with the Library's Sirsi system. Custom menus were designed by staff to meet the needs of the Roanoke community. Included on the Valley View kiosk is information on local shopping, movie times, government information and specially designed sites in Vietnamese and Spanish. The kiosk also features a high-resolution 17" touch screen monitor. The ebranch has four sets of lockers for a total of 50 lockers. Staff can communicate with the lockers from the Main circulation desk computers to assign a locker number for a reserve item. The item is placed in the locker by the library's courier and the customer is then contacted via email or phone. With their library card and the locker number the customer can then retrieve the item from the locker. The traditional book drop allows for convenient return of items. Books are then returned from the Mall book return to any of the four library systems cooperating in the Roanoke Valley Library consortium. In designing a remote ebranch it seemed logical to add other library services. The ebranch will offer scheduled story times and puppet shows. A puppet theatre with storage for supplies was designed into the ebranch structure. In setting up the ebranch we realized that the mall did not offer wireless access. The Library ebranch area now is a wireless hot spot for Mall customers.

The total cost of the ebranch was approximately \$80,000. The following is a breakdown of the cost by component: Kiosk- \$38,000, book return -\$ 2,000, Millwork to encase the lockers and kiosk-\$20,000, Lockers (50 lockers/or 4 sets) -\$20,000.

The opening of this ebranch allows the library to reach out in a non-traditional way. We needed to expand our services. The Valley View ebranch helps the Roanoke Public Library system to provide the convenience our customers want in a new and innovative way.